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"We commit to the safety and well-being of the people of New Mexico by doing the right thing, always."



Re: **Prison Gang Information**

From: **Sergio Sapien, PNM STIU Captain; Chris Cupit, PNM STIU Officer**

Date: **January 18, 2018**

Prison gangs present a difficult problem for correctional staff. Gangs, formally entitled Security Threat Groups (STG'S) by the New Mexico Department of Corrections, are known to perpetrate organized criminal activity through violence and intimidation. Gang activity poses a threat to the orderly operations of institutions, and disrupts the overall operation of the department.

Gang ideologies exemplify intimidation, secrecy, and strong arm tactics. Gangs exhibit the potential for disruptive, violent, and destructive activity, and are recognized by most corrections officials. A 1985 study by Camille and George Camp, *Prison Gangs: Their Extent Nature and Impact* identified active prison gangs in 33 of 50 states. Today, in some way, shape, or form, gang activity affects every city, county, and state.

The New Mexico Department of Corrections began a pro-active approach in combating the menacing affects of gang activity. The implementation of CD-Policy 131500 (Security Threat Groups), and CD-Policy 143000 (Prison Level V and Level VI) collectively, provides staff with the tools for identification, tracking, close monitoring of gang related activities, and provides for the appropriate housing of individual security threat group members.

- **Power:** Power in numbers, if a gang has more numbers, (Soldiers), they have more power to intimidate and influence the rest of the prison population.
- **Support:** Sense of having a brotherhood/ family that will back each other in any situation.
- **Drugs:** The gang that controls the drugs, controls the prison. By having a member that has a drug connection is good for all the other members, due to the other members will get a cut/piece of the narcotics for free or a discounted price. If a non-member does not pay for the drugs from a member, the member could use the gang to assist in collection of that owed by any means necessary.
- **Street Cred:** Prison Gangs conduct various felonious acts within the prison. The more violent the acts, the more Cred the gang earns. While prison gang members conduct criminal offences while incarcerated, the gang receives more Cred within the prison, and out on the streets. The more Cred a prison gang has the more purpose, power, and support the gang offers its members, in prison and on the street.

Structure of Prison Gangs

In reference to Prison Gangs within the New Mexico Corrections Department, each structure will vary between Security Threat Groups (STG) and Disruptive Groups (DG). STG Group structure one has a Don, Jefe, Godfather, Generals, Lieutenants, and soldiers. STG's will also vote on a "llavero", Key Holder, to be the ultimate decision maker for the Facility, or Pod. Group structure has a leader, panel, chief of security, and soldiers. Veteran leaders tend to be more respected and tend to lead the soldiers in each facility. STG members tend to have all the same rank with veteran leaders taking the lead in the facilities. DG's typically use a more democratic approach as structure of the group is concerned. DG's will rely on an odd numbered panel of veteran inmates in decision making. DG's reference veteran inmates as "Big Homie", and take into consideration this inmate/inmates decision making as reference more so than other members. DG's do not have a set organizational structure like STG's.

Rules

- The basic prison rules will apply as follows (not in specific order): Never Rat or give information to law enforcement any information; have respect for yourself and others; never back down; don't lie; don't steal; child molesters are hit/assault on site; always produce your paperwork when asked; don't disrespect or allow yourself to be disrespected.
- STG's will have their own rules or "reglas", which vary by the group, yet also use basic prison rules.
- DG's, depending on the gang, may have their own rules/reglas, which usually the basic prison rules, or will implement rules from their street gang.
- Rules are enforced by the STG/DG the individual is associated with. The rule that is broken, will be met with sanctions deemed by the STG/DG, with the severity of the rule that was broken. Sanctions can be, but are not limited to, disassociation from the group, assault, group assault, up to murder/death.

Communication

- Coded written messages/letters, known as "kites or weelas"
- Sign language
- Speaking in Code
- Coded telephone calls to family or members on the street

- Passing messages verbally from one member to another who has access to other facilities or pods

- Typically any gang business will be conducted on the yard, or during recreation

Tattoos

Prison Gang members use tattoos to identify, where they are from, street gang association, beliefs, and prison gang association. Prison Tattoos are typically placed where the wearer can be easily identified by other inmates, such as a police officer in uniform is easily identified by the community while in uniform.

Tattoos may be viewed as an extension of STG/DG gang used to identify the wearer as a member of a particular gang. As in the case, the tattoo will usually include the name, initials, or symbols of the gang and, in some instances, could include the area to which the gang member belongs. Tattoos have much significance about a person; tattoos relay the personality, beliefs, affiliation, and the background of the person.

Membership

- STG: Must have a sponsor in good standing. Must not have any bad charges, or have ratted in the past, Blood in and blood out (for life), meaning you must spill blood for entry into the gang, which is typically referred to as “earning your bones”, or die to leave the gang. Majority vote from 3 or more actual members. Once into the gang, one is expected to perform activities for the STG, mostly violent/criminal ones along with drug activity.
- DG: Recruited based on city, area, or street gang they are from. Must not have any bad charges or ratted in the past. Are typically allowed entry based on these rules. Once into the gang, one is expected to perform activities for the STG, mostly violent/criminal ones along with drug activity. Are not held to the Blood In Blood Out methodology.